



WISEWOMAN

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**Success Story 12** Healthwise Partnership Promotes Physical Activity for WISEWOMAN Participants in Winston-Salem

*YWCA Scholarships Reduce Cost and Access Barriers for Women*

**Location** Winston-Salem, North Carolina

**Focus** Reach underserved women who otherwise would not have opportunities to be physically active.

**Strategy** Community partners collaborated to offer YWCA scholarships to help women in need become more physically active.

**Levels of Success** Many positive community successes have occurred. The program has removed cost and access barriers that were preventing underserved women from being physically active. This outreach strategy also has attracted more women to the WISEWOMAN program.

Success also has occurred at the organizational level. By forming partnerships with other agencies, this WISEWOMAN project has extended its resources and increased women's use of community resources. The partnerships also have increased the chances that these services will be sustained in the community, if and when funding for this project ceases.

**Results** Fifteen women have received YWCA scholarships so far.

**For More Information** Jackie Boggs, RN  
WISEWOMAN Project Director  
Forsyth County Department of Public Health  
P.O. Box 686  
Winston-Salem, NC 27101  
Phone: 336-727-2890, ext. 3640  
E-mail: boggsjd@iris.co.forsyth.nc.us

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The Healthwise program, funded by the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust and the WISEWOMAN program, provides health education, counseling, and referrals to at-risk WISEWOMAN clients. As part of their counseling, clients are encouraged to become more physically active. Most clients are referred to chair exercise classes or walking groups sponsored by Healthwise. However, patients with physical limitations or schedule conflicts did not have these options.

The YWCA of Winston-Salem/Forsyth County was a partner for In Control, another Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust grant funded program for patients with diabetes. In Control patients received low-cost YWCA memberships as part of their care. When the In Control grant expired, staff at the Forsyth County Department of Public Health and the YWCA recognized an opportunity to sustain the program at a low cost. The YWCA successfully sought funding from the United Way of Forsyth County to provide 60 memberships through Healthwise referrals. Fifteen of the 60 memberships were for WISEWOMAN participants.

Memberships are distributed to WISEWOMAN clients as YWCA scholarships. The scholarships allow women to purchase a 1-month membership for \$5 versus the regular \$30 cost. Scholarships are incentives that encourage WISEWOMAN participants to engage in physical activity and that recruit women into the program.

WISEWOMAN clients have their blood pressure and cholesterol levels checked at the Forsyth County Department of Public Health. Women are then counseled about healthy diets, physical activity, and, if needed, smoking cessation and stress management. Women are then referred to the Healthwise program coordinator to develop an individualized physical activity plan. After the clients answer health questions and their physicians approve their participation in the physical activity programs, the Healthwise coordinator can offer them YWCA scholarships.

Women who receive YWCA scholarships must attend an orientation to learn about the exercise equipment or attend classes at the YWCA. The women are required to engage in physical activity at least twice a week for a 6-month period.

They must sign in at each visit. The Healthwise coordinator monitors attendance and provides feedback and motivation for women at follow-up visits. Incentives are awarded to women who achieve their health and physical activity goals.

The scholarships provide women with a variety of options for being physically active. For example, women with severe joint problems or those who are extremely obese can attend water aerobics classes at the YWCA. Other women

come to the exercise classes or use the treadmills, exercise bikes, stair machines, weight machines, and free weights in the YWCA fitness room. The YWCA also makes it easy for women to be physically active because of its convenient evening and weekend hours.

## Importance of Success

The WISEWOMAN, Healthwise and YWCA program partnership allows at-risk women to participate in physical activity programs appropriate for their health needs during convenient

evening and weekend hours. The partnership also encourages women who are unaware of WISEWOMAN to enroll and become physically active at a price they can afford. As women seek to achieve their health goals, WISEWOMAN offers on-going support and motivation and fosters a supportive environment among participants. Through access to Healthwise and the YWCA, WISEWOMAN clients have had opportunities to become more physically active, lose weight, increase their stamina, and better control their blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

## Lessons Learned

- Find partners who can help you remove barriers for underserved women and reach out to more women. For this WISEWOMAN project, providing YWCA scholarships reduces both cost and access barriers and attracts women to the WISEWOMAN program.
- By forming partnerships with others, you can extend your resources and increase use of community resources. Establishing strong partnerships also increases the chances of sustaining these services, if and when funding for your program ends.

*“The YWCA scholarship, provided by WISEWOMAN, gave me a mental break and allowed me to exercise in addition to changing my eating habits for the best. As a result, I have lost weight, reduced my cholesterol, and have more stamina to take care of my husband.”*

– Rose, WISEWOMAN participant